

## CHAPTER 22.

# “WE WRITE TO SERVE”: THE INTERSECTIONS OF SERVICE LEARNING, GRANT WRITING, AND THE FEMINIST RHETORICAL AGENCY

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*Linking students with community organizations upholds mutually-beneficial relationships through service learning (SL). Theoretically, SL proponents may be viewed as feminist rhetorical agents who foster social transformation through community projects that accomplish the mission of non-profit agencies. Writing grants for community partners may introduce students to rhetoric outside the academy (Coogan, 2006), but writing personal reflections completes their civic actions since subjective positions on issues of (and plans for) social change are liberally inscribed. Without critical analyses for future action, our community service efforts are futile (Herzberg, 1994) as seen in course designs with diverse forms of critical reflections, such as the creative revision projects by Julie Barger (Chapter 23, this collection), Take Back the Night engagement reflections by Katherine Fredlund (Chapter 25, this collection), and digital storytelling by Stephanie Bower (Chapter 24, this collection). This chapter promotes SL-based grant writing as a feminist intervention technique, along with student- and community partner-reflections on SL projects aimed at changing the community and the lives of its members.*

## INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Dixie State University (DSU) is an open enrollment institution located in St. George, Utah. In 2010, *CNN Money* ranked the city of St. George as the 80<sup>th</sup> “Best Place to Live” while *Forbes Magazine* ranked it 1<sup>st</sup> on the 2013 “Top City

for Job-Seeking College Grads” (*DSU Briefing Book*, 2015). DSU is the fastest growing 4-year institution in the Utah System of Higher Education with 9,000+ students (*DSU Active Learning Active Life*, 2016) and 175 faculty members plus adjunct teachers (Alder, 2014). Its enrollment growth has led to 15 new baccalaureate degrees and several associates, certificates, academic minors, and faculty members with Ph.D. or terminal degree credentials (*DSU Briefing Book*, 2015).

Accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, DSU is a public comprehensive university that promotes a culture of *learning, engagement, and opportunity* (*Dixie 2020*, 2015, emphasis added). These core themes may have overlapping outcomes but altogether help fulfill DSU’s mission of enrichment in which students meet their educational goals in a supportive learning environment and extend a culture of engagement and opportunity through citizenship, inclusion, collaboration, etc. Aside from the trainings they receive in small classes, DSU students are also involved in various community service projects either on their own or as part of a coursework to advance DSU’s motto, “active learning. active life.”. The Campus to Community service program was organized in 2001 to enhance practical applications of classroom learning (*DSU Briefing Book*, 2015). This type of service deepens students’ awareness and understanding of societal issues through diverse inter/disciplinary knowledge and practical experiences (Lucas, 2009).

The university’s English department promotes experiential, service learning (SL) through one of its upper-division course, English 3130 or Grant and Proposal Writing, offered every spring semester. Intended for English majors in the Professional and Technical Writing program and open to students who want to learn more about grant writing, this course examines rhetorical techniques for writing effective grant proposals, the processes that lead to successful grant and proposal writing, and strategies for effective collaboration with non-profit organizations. Students write grant documents that respond to the need statements of local non-profit organizations, including those that provide community-based housing, transportation, educational, and livelihood assistance to women and children who were victims of domestic violence, etc. To institutionalize community engagement in the department, students select community partners with 501(c)(3) status and spend approximately 96 hours of service writing grants for them, while the instructor devotes 140 hours planning and directing the grant proposal-writing process. Students then receive SL certificates in a formal ceremony hosted by DSU and submit written proposals to their respective organizations at the end of the semester.

While finding non-profit agencies willing to work with students can be a challenge, clear-cut contracts and expectations for stakeholders in the beginning of the semester foster success. This arrangement has been mutually beneficial

on two accounts: organizations gain *pro bono* grant writers during the semester and students acquire new writing skills that meet course learning outcomes. Grant proposals are considered technical documents, but students also learn how to navigate around their passion and logic with compelling arguments for funding (Payne, 2011). Providing tangible opportunities to write inspires them to acquire purposeful writing skills as their personal reflections provoke a sense of feminist rhetorical agency (Hawisher, 2003). On the whole, this SL-based project advances grant writing as a feminist intervention technique that changes the community and the lives of its members.

## THEORETICAL RATIONALE

In her approach to rhetorical feminism, Laura Micciche (2010) promoted the integration of feminist methods into the conception and performance of writing. I argue that her conceptual framework, if applied to service learning (SL) and technical writing courses, would expect students to develop critical analysis, non-profit collaboration, and advance planning through grant writing. Specifically, upper-division writing courses with SL-based approaches would enable students to work closely with local non-profit organizations and help bolster their mission statements through funded projects for the benefit of the community. The grant writing course discussed here mirrors feminist intervention approaches, such as reciprocal collaboration, social awareness, reflection, civic engagement, agency, and changed-based writing.

Grant writers as rhetorical agents aim to show how an organization’s mission matches that of a prospective funding source’s. With this same purpose comes a methodological re-assessment of rhetoric and in particular, the feminist rhetorical agency, “as an embodied social praxis” (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 132). Writing grants for non-profit recipients in support of funding community projects for the citizenry becomes a social responsibility akin to disrupting problematic conventions and imitating feminist rhetorical acts that are purposeful, productive, and dynamic. Such writing/communicative performance illustrates how rhetoric(s) “work, and are at work, in the world” (Griffin & Chávez, 2012, p. 19). As an argumentative piece, a grant proposal document needs to persuade its funding sponsor that a problem can be solved (or an opportunity explored) through its project plan, budget projections, and evaluative procedures.

Because funded grants impact the community and its recipients, the power to interrogate and disrupt normalcy is inevitable. Corollary to this is the fact that feminist rhetoricians often expand foundational concepts such as “rhetorical space, argument, genre, and style” (Buchanan & Ryan, 2010, p. xviii) and grant writers exhibit “ways of *doing* feminist rhetorics . . . integrat[ing] feminist

methods into the conception and performance of writing” (Micciche, 2010, p. 184). For Micciche, writing is the crux of feminist inquiry and feminist rhetorical theorists must stimulate gendered assertions on composing pedagogies (Nickoson, et al., 2012). Since grant writing follows a rhetorical approach that helps student writers use effective communication strategies to accommodate change (Johnson-Sheehan, 2008), this SL-based course forges a feminist rhetorical practice that permeates Micciche’s notion of writing and engagement.

Moreover, rhetoric and writing practitioners embodying feminist tactics outside the academy affect societal transformation (Cushman, 1996). *Composing Feminist Intervention’s* course design narratives portray collaborative partnership tasks that stimulate change-based agents, such as Barger’s collaborative connection presentations to understand feminism from a collective standpoint, Fredlund’s DIY activist rhetoric projects to address a rhetorical situation and a community partner’s needs, and Bower’s digital storytelling to disseminate alternative stories of the marginalized in collaboration with community groups. But when project proposals satisfy a community need through grants, these awards make possible innovative solutions and new directions for intended recipients. Composing grant proposals requires careful attention to research, strategic planning, and argumentation and treats rhetoric as a “form of action aimed at producing effects” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997, p. 9). Here, community service writing builds upon conventional writing instruction and elevates the study of rhetoric, so student writers expand their understanding of rhetorical variations with pertinent skills to navigate multiple discourse communities (Bacon, 1997). They also gain practical experience, technical facility, and confidence knowing that their proposed documents may change the lives of community members.

Finally, SL cultivates disciplinary knowledge when integrated into a course where students develop problem-solving and social responsibility (Jacoby, 2009; McDonald 2011). Community service and learning outcomes, interlaced with critical reflection and civic responsibility (Deans, 2000; Gottlieb & Robinson, 2006), sets an SL-based grant writing course apart most especially when student writers receive SL certificates after each semester to authenticate their civic action-and-reflection duties and showcase a collective sense of altruism as feminist rhetorical agents closing opportunity gaps.

## CRITICAL REFLECTION

What makes this SL-based course stand out from volunteerism, internship, practicum, and charity work is the merging of both course objectives and community service to promote social change. The English department’s SL grant

writing course (see Appendix A) enacts DSU’s core themes by instilling not only the principle of *learning* for academic advancement but also the *opportunity* for service and engagement. Our pedagogical focus on the rhetoric of grant proposals assists our student writers’ persuasive and strategic planning skills and while we pursue a programmatic curriculum on SL, we are also open to revisions as reflective teaching dictates.

Despite the challenges of working with community-based organizations, three major benefits support the teaching of grant writing as a feminist intervention technique within the framework of SL:

### **1. RECIPROCAL COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS INCREASE SOCIAL AWARENESS.**

Ideally, working with local non-profit agencies to forge real-world writing experiences enables not only campus-community partnerships but also social awareness. Such cognizant reciprocity embodies feminist intervention as support systems and interconnected partnerships are being strengthened. Admittedly, challenges between stakeholders might arise (e.g., conflicting schedules, misunderstood expectations, lack of mutual cooperation), but these issues can easily be avoided by enforcing a set of guidelines before the semester:

- Select partners that connect to your course topic(s). Invite to class (if applicable).
- Provide a list of potential partners.
- Create an open relationship and communicate with partners.
- Coach students on how to work with non-profit agencies.
- Confirm students have completed hours. (Fisher, 2011)

In addition, designating a student-community partner contract of agreement also helps clarify common expectations between students and non-profit organizations (see Appendix B). This contract outlines the guidelines and due dates of selected grant sections that need organizational input distinct from a waiver of liability and release for service activities required of SL courses. With mutual cooperation, the entire process recognizes community-based programs as sites of power that instill social conscience and, most importantly, change. Before writing the proposal, student writers are initially asked to do *strategic planning* in which they carefully examine a selected organization’s mission, goals, characteristics, etc. and propose possible projects that capitalize on strengths (and minimize weaknesses) while enforcing its mission and objectives (see <https://flobenb07.wixsite.com/bacabacfemschaplins>).

## **2. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND PRIVATE WRITING ENHANCE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

Instructors using an SL-based curriculum for grant writing can generate social responsibility and promote civic engagement through constant reflections or private writing. As a feminist intervention strategy, developing community engagement from the vantage point of writing performativity illustrates Micciche's stamp of "*doing* feminist rhetorics" (2010, p. 184). Writing personal reflections is an essential process for my students to transform service activities and course objectives into genuine learning. In a sense, SL courses value private writing because they integrate academic class work and community-based experiences together (Anson, 1997). These reflexive practices help my students understand their own grant writing skills and the application of these skills outside the academy. A variety of reflection activities may be assigned (e.g., journals, analytic papers, electronic forums), but asking the right questions to ensure critical thinking might also pose difficulty. In this regard, I often use the following guidelines to formulate my reflective prompts:

- Why? Reflecting on learning goals
- What? Observing and describing experiences critically
- So What? Identifying and analyzing systemic and structural issues
- Now What? Learning inventories and action plans (Jeanfreau, 2013)

The teacher might assign reflection exercises throughout the term to gradually address these points, but the *final reflection* should ask students to tease out specific details from their grant/service experiences and future action plans. I find these prompts often reveal the gravity of the current situation and/or immediacy of the proposer's evaluation/dissemination/sustainability methods through my *student reflections*. In tandem with *community partner reflections*, these discursive practices definitely enhance a more holistic sense of civic engagement and feminist praxis.

## **3. ACQUISITION OF GRANT WRITING SKILLS ENGENDERS A FEMINIST RHETORICAL AGENCY.**

Through service or experiential learning, students gain real-world applications of grant writing skills that legitimize a feminist rhetorical agency. An undergraduate course such as this accelerates a rare form of feminist intervention viz. experiential learning and develops one's rhetorical agency toward changed-based grant writing. By combining community service with classroom instruc-

tion through active pedagogy (Jeavons, 1995), the instructor and non-profit organizations in this context have a shared responsibility of training student writers to tackle future advocacies. Our programmatic approach to teaching SL-based grant proposals supports the militant potential for English departments to direct SL participants to “read and write, attend to cultural studies, and entertain questions about public policy” (Schutz & Gere, 1998, p. 130). Though one of the most incessant critiques many instructors might have of an SL-based curriculum concerns assessment—and we do need additional research to evaluate various SL models and their effects on student learning, etc. (Pedersen, Meyer, & Hargrave, 2015)—our student reflections may equally serve as qualitative assessment, along with their graded, cumulative assignments that build on one another. In fact, I always require my students to finish each proposal section successfully before moving to the next one, and before submitting a final document, to critique someone else’s intermediate draft based on a set of *review panel criteria* from class discussions. Given these points, I believe that students who acquire not only critical thinking but also grant writing skills in service of community organizations have the capacity to act as feminist rhetorical agents and affect sustainable, social change even after they exit the course. This form of feminist intervention prepares them to critically assess problems, propose solutions, or even manage funding for non-profits to level the playing field, push for equity of opportunity, and transform society at large.

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## APPENDIX A: COURSE SYLLABUS

### English 3130: Grant and Proposal Writing (3 credits)

#### Course Description

English 3130 is an upper-division course for English majors emphasizing in Professional and Technical Writing and open to students who want to learn about grant writing. It examines the rhetorical techniques for writing effective grant proposal documents, the processes that lead to successful grant and proposal writing, and the strategies for effective collaboration with non-profit organizations.

*Prerequisite:* Intermediate Writing with a grade of C or better. 3 lecture hours per week.

#### Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of English 3130, students will demonstrate their ability to:

- Compose a grant proposal that exhibits what the fundamental elements of each section.
- Apply critical thinking when writing the current situation, goal(s), objectives, and tasks.
- Generate a solid budget and project evaluation plan.

## Methods of Assessment

### *Formative Assessment*

Preparation Checks: Periodically show completion of the grant writing process based on exercises/assignments required for the Proposal

Assignments: Submit a Grant Proposal Development Notebook with graded exercises/assignments that lead toward the Grant Proposal Document:

- Ex. 1 Strategic Planning
- Ex. 2 Current Situation/Need Statement Section
- Ex. 3 Funding Sources Assignment
- Ex. 4-7 Project Plan (with Prewriting exercises)
- Ex. 8 Evaluation, Dissemination, Sustainability
- Ex. 9 Qualifications Section
- Ex. 10 Budget
- Ex. 11 Front and Back Matter
- Ex. 12 Review Panel Evaluation

In-class Composition: Reflection Essays

### *Summative Assessment*

End-of-Term Portfolio: Grant Proposal Document and Grant Proposal Development Notebook

Oral Presentation: Grant Proposal Software Presentation

### *Value-Added Assessment*

Pre/Post Test: Take a course-specific pre- and post-tests to assess the ways in which learning has increased during the semester. This will be a multiple-choice test based on relevant grant writing principles from the course textbook.

*This syllabus also includes required course materials and policies on revision, writing conferences, attendance, disruptive behavior, late work, plagiarism, disability statement, title IX, and resources for writing assistance.*

**Calendar** (This class schedule is for 3-hour sessions that meets once a week.)

**Recommended textbook**: Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2008). *Writing proposals* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Longman.

## Week 1

Introduction to the course. Discuss Chapter 1: Introduction to Proposals and Grants. Service Learning Contract and Student-Community Partner Agreement Contract. Possible proposal projects and nonprofit organizations. Non-profit organization guest panel.

## Week 2

Pre-Test. Grant Proposal Development Notebook instructions. Service-Learn-

ing Contract and Student-Community Partner Agreement Contract. Discuss Chapter 3. Review a sample Grant Proposal Document. Share each proposal idea—how is it related to the organization’s long- and short-term goals? Introduce Ex. 1: Strategic Planning Exercise and sample. Start answering Exercise 1.

### **Week 3**

Submit Ex.1: Strategic Planning Exercise. Share learning points from doing this exercise. Discuss Chapter 4. Introduce Ex. 2.1: Current Situation Section and sample. Start Ex. 2.1: Current Situation Section.

### **Week 4**

Ex. 2.2: Peer review of Current Situation Section. In-class revisions.

Revision Tip: Improve your Current Situation Section by adding verifiable facts and statistics to enhance the scope and justification of your project. Review source integration and proper documentation format.

Introduce Ex. 3: Report on Funding Sources and sample. In-class workshop: Using your Current Situation’s keywords, start looking for at least two (2) different types of funding sources—government, foundation, or corporate source. Discuss Chapter 2.

### **Week 5**

Discuss and submit Ex. 2.1 Current Situation Section materials and Ex. 3: Report on Funding Sources (2 different types). Discuss Chapter 5. Introduce Ex. 4: Objectives Worksheet, Ex. 5: Mapping and Outlining the Solution exercise, and Ex. 6: WHY Table Exercise. Insert SMARTE criteria to objectives. Start working on these prewriting exercises.

### **Week 6**

Discuss prewriting exercises in class. Introduce Ex. 7.1: Project Plan Section and start working on it.

Note: From hereon, be sure to keep revising each section of the Grant Proposal Document returned based on teacher feedback. 😊

### **Week 7**

Ex. 7.2: Peer review of Project Plan Section. Discuss and work on Gantt Charts. In-class revisions.

Revision Tip: Improve your Project Plan Section by adding a Project Timeline using a Gantt Chart. Introduce and discuss

Ex.8: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Sustainability Sections with sample based on reading assignment from Mikelonis, Betsinger, & Kampf (2004). Start drafting on Evaluation, Dissemination, and Sustainability Sections. In-class Composition: Midterm Reflections. Progress report: Share working relationship with your chosen non-profit organization.

### **Week 8**

Discuss and submit Ex. 7.1: Project Plan Section (with Project Timeline/Gantt Chart) materials and prewriting exercises 6, 5, and 4. Peer review of Evaluation, Dissemination, and Sustainability Sections. In-class revisions.

Revision Tip: Improve your Project Plan Section by adding some steps and/or tasks derived from your Evaluation and Dissemination Sections. These items are important and have budget considerations.

Introduce Ex. 9.1: Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet and start working on it. Discuss Chapter 6.

### **Week 9**

Discuss and submit your Ex.8: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Sustainability Sections. Work with partners and peer-review Ex. 9.1 Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet. Introduce Ex. 9.2: Qualifications Section and start working on it.

### **Week 10**

Ex. 9.3: Peer review of Qualifications Section. In-class revisions. Discuss and examine the Proposal Sections → Important: Prewrite ideas for your Introduction c/o Six Moves in p. 121 and Conclusion c/o Five Moves in p. 125 sections (we will continue with this draft-in-progress next meeting). Discuss Chapter 7. Introduce Ex. 10.1: Expanded Project Plan Summary and Budget Chart, examine a sample, and start working on it.

### **Week 11**

Discuss and submit Ex. 9.2: Qualifications Section and Ex. 9.1: Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet materials. In-class Workshop: Grab another writing team and help each other read and interpret each sponsor's guidelines. Discuss Ex 10.1 Expanded Project Plan Summary and Budget Chart in class. Discuss Chapter 8. Introduce and discuss sample models of Ex. 10.2: Budget Section with Budget Table and Budget Narrative. Revisit Proposal Sections c/o Chapter 7; keep working on your ideas for your Introduction c/o Six Moves in p. 121 and Conclusion c/o Five Moves in p. 125.

### **Week 12**

Peer review of Ex. 10.2 Budget Section with Budget Table and Budget Narra-

tive. In-class revisions. Discuss Chapter 12. Review Grant Proposal Document content (see sample). Introduce Ex. 11.1: Appendices (BACK), Ex. 11.2: Transmittal letter and Executive Summary (FRONT), and Ex 11.3: Cover Page and Table of Contents (FRONT). Start working on your Front and Back Matter exercises. Discuss Chapter 11.

Note: Insert at least three (3) graphics in your Grant Proposal Document (e.g., Gantt Chart, Budget Table, and Budget Narrative Table).

### **Week 13**

Discuss and submit your Ex. 10.2: Budget Section with Budget Table and Budget Narrative and Ex. 10.1: Expanded Project Plan Summary and Budget Chart. In-class revisions and mini-conferences on Front and Back materials. Discuss Chapter 11.

### **Week 14**

Discuss Ex. 10.2: Budget Section with Budget Table and Budget Narrative and Ex. 10.1: Expanded Project Plan Summary and Budget Chart. Incorporate any comments into your Grant Proposal Document. In-class revisions and mini-conferences.

### **Week 15** *Note Extended Office Hours for Conferences*

Submit one rough draft copy of your complete Grant Proposal Document (with Introduction and Conclusion). Introduce Exercise 12: Review Panel Evaluation.

Note: Use the form provided to you to review one another's proposals. Take your time and do a good job. The reviewers' evaluation sheets will be collected, and you will be graded on the thoroughness and effectiveness of your review. When done, discuss your reviews with one another and turn in reviewer's evaluation sheets to your instructor.

Grant Proposal Development Notebook checklist of materials. Oral Presentation sign-up sheet. Guest panel discussion: Tips from successful grant proposal writers.

### **Week 16**

Final Exam Prep (Narrative Self-Reflection Essay and Post-Test). Debrief. Discuss what to do if the sponsor says “Yes,” and what to do if the sponsor says “No.” In-class Composition: End-of-Term Reflections. Submit one copy of your Grant Proposal Document final draft and Grant Proposal Development Notebook. Oral Presentations.

## Finals Week

Final Exam with Post-Test and Narrative Self-Reflection Essay.

*Note:* Grant Proposal Documents and Grant Proposal Development Notebooks will be returned after the exam. Based on teacher feedback, each student will revise the grant proposal and submit the draft to his/her respective community partner to comply with the Student-Community Partner Agreement.

## APPENDIX B: STUDENT—COMMUNITY PARTNER AGREEMENT

The practice of service learning relies upon communication, mutual respect, and shared learning among students, faculty, community partner staff and the broader community. This agreement is a statement of common expectations.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Partner/Non-Profit Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor or Contact Person Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Service-Learning Agreement and Commitment

Dixie State University students agree to the following:

- Maintain professional behavior and demeanor at all times.
- Maintain confidentiality of agency clients at all times.
- Maintain contact with organization supervisors as needed to request for pertinent information on selected assignments that lead to the composition of the grant proposal (cf. course content and due dates below).
- Maintain academic honesty when drafting other sections of the proposal.
- Submit a copy of the revised grant proposal document to the organization at the end of the semester.

The Supervisor or Contact Person agrees to facilitate student involvement and learning in the following ways:

- Provide an orientation of the organization's mission and goals.
- Assist students as needed by providing pertinent information on se-

lected assignments that lead to the composition of the grant proposal (cf. course content and due dates below).

- Allow students to work on other sections of the proposal on their own to develop their grant writing skills. Note that writing the grant proposal or proposal sections for students is considered cheating and will not be tolerated.
- Understand that students are still in the process of learning how to write a grant proposal for a grade; not assisting them with pertinent organization information for selected assignments will jeopardize their learning and success on the course.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor/Contact Person Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignments with Due Dates that Need Information from Non-Profit Organizations:**

**Exercise 1.** Strategic Planning Exercise → \*\*\*

**Exercise 9.1** Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet (to identify strengths and weaknesses of organization and possible competitors) → \*\*\*

**Exercise 9.2** Qualifications Section (to show why your organization is uniquely qualified to handle the needs of the funding source) → *rough draft and final draft* \*\*\*

**Exercise 10.1** Expanded Project Plan Summary and Budget Chart → \*\*\*

**Exercise 10.2** Budget and Budget Narrative → *rough draft and final draft* \*\*\*

**Exercise 11.1** Appendices → \*\*\*

Note: All other exercises are dependent on each student’s grant writing skills. Grant proposals and/or proposal sections written by community partners are not allowed. (Note added appendices at <https://flore nb07.wixsite.com/bacabacfemschapl ink s>)